



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

13th May, 2009

Subject
Scrutiny Development 2008/2009 – Action Plan

1 Purpose of the Note

To provide the Committee with information on the progress made on the Scrutiny Development Action Plan for 2008/2009 (attached as the Appendix to this note).

2 Recommendations

The Committee is requested:-

- a) to note the progress made on the 2008/2009 Action Plan.
- b) to note that a new Plan is being developed for 2009/2010.
- c) to consider whether there are any issues which should be included in the new Plan.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The Committee approved the 2008/2009 Action Plan at the end of April 2008.
- 3.2 The Plan now attached identifies the actions which have been completed and those on which work still need to be done. It indicates that the uncompleted actions will be included in the 2009/2010 Plan, which is currently being developed.
- 3.3 The Committee is asked to consider whether there are any issues it wishes to be included in the 2009/2010 Plan.
- 3.4 It is intended to submit that Plan to the Committee at the beginning of the new Municipal Year.

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APPENDIX

Scrutiny Development: Issues and Actions for 2008/09 Municipal Year

Vision for Scrutiny: Scrutiny's role is to agree high-quality, relevant recommendations, that are supported by the Executive and partners and lead to measurable service improvements and/or tangible benefits for Coventry residents that would not otherwise have been achieved.

The Issue	Action	Timescale
<p>Being clear about what Scrutiny is for</p> <p>Coventry has defined a vision for Scrutiny which sets out the objectives that it is aiming to achieve. This needs to be more widely communicated and understood.</p> <p>When organisations and individuals engage with Scrutiny, they need to be clear about how they are contributing to these objectives and what is expected of them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare short (1 side) summary on Scrutiny in Coventry setting out role, purpose, what successful Scrutiny looks like and how it fits into the governance process. • Prepare short guidelines for people involved in Scrutiny (Members, officers, partners, members of the public etc.) – what they can expect and what is expected of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle
<p><i>Progress: these actions have been completed.</i></p>		
<p>Shaping the Work Programme</p> <p>Concentrating Scrutiny work on the most significant issues for the Council and its Local Area Agreement Partners will help make sure that it uses its time most effectively. Focussing on issues where it can support service improvement and benefits for local people will help make sure that it has the biggest impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the work planning process and timetable for 2008/09 (This should include defining the co-ordinating role for Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and developing some guidelines or a prioritisation framework that sets out how review issues should be identified and the key themes to be covered etc.) • Deliver presentations to Directorate Management Teams and the Local Public Service Board to help inform the work planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle
<p><i>Progress: these actions have been completed.</i></p>		

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Planning and Preparing for Scrutiny work/meetings</p> <p>To make the best use of time, proper preparation needs to be carried out. Being clear about the purpose of the piece of work being done and making sure that the right information is prepared is particularly important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more structured approach for dealing with Scrutiny work streams (a framework for each piece of work that sets out purpose, expected outcomes etc.) • Develop guidance for presenting information (how reports, presentations, briefings etc. should be prepared and presented) • Relevant officers to attend pre meetings to help shape items and ensure the brief is met • Ensure that report deadlines etc. met (as they would be for Cabinet Reports) • Scrutiny Co-ordinators to screen reports, presentations etc. to ensure quality control and that they meet the purpose required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • Throughout year • Throughout year • Throughout year
<p><i>Progress: the action shown in the first bullet point has been completed. However, Boards could be more rigorous in applying the more structured approach referred to and therefore this should be included in the 2009/2010 plan. The action shown in the second bullet point has been completed. The actions shown in the remaining bullet points have been carried out throughout the year (and will continue).</i></p>		
<p>Improving time spent on Scrutiny activity/ in meetings</p> <p>Scrutiny does most of its work through committee style meetings. There are other ways of working that could help make the best use of time and achieve the best outcomes. When a piece of work is being planned we should consider the most appropriate way of working to achieve the outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan in advance how to deal with each Scrutiny topic, including consideration of the best methods of addressing them – formal meetings, time limited groups, site visits, engagement of experts/service users/members of the public, use of public and private meetings etc. • Introduce timings to meeting agendas • Clear purpose, outcomes and recommendations for each item of business • Introduce process review at the end of each meeting to learn lessons for the future about what went well and what could be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout year • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle
<p><i>Progress: these actions have been carried out throughout the year and will continue. However, Boards could be more rigorous in thinking about alternative ways of working to get the best outcomes and this will be included in the 2009/010 action plan.</i></p>		

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Improving support, training and development to everyone involved in Scrutiny</p> <p>Lots of people from Members, officers, partner organisations and members of the public get involved in Scrutiny. To help make sure that everyone contributes effectively and gets the most out of the experience, we need to provide a range of development and support activities.</p>	<p>Develop Scrutiny Training and Development Plan. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny contribution to Member induction, including initial briefing, open session • Plan common framework for the first meetings of Scruco and each Board • Review input to officer induction • Review input to Democratic Process training in Corporate Training Plan • Review Scrutiny content in Member 1-1's • Develop joint training for Members and officers • Training/refresher training on Scrutiny for senior/middle managers • Process for sharing and introducing best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 12 months • Within 12 months
<p><i>Progress: the actions shown in the first two bullet points have been completed. The remaining actions have yet to be carried out: they will need to be included in the 2009/2010 plan.</i></p>		

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Encouraging more people to get involved in Scrutiny</p> <p>If Scrutiny is to have a bigger impact on service users and local residents, we need to increase the opportunities for them to engage with the process.</p> <p>Partner organisations will be required to engage with Scrutiny under the LGPIH Act and we will need to make sure that everyone gets the maximum benefit out of this.</p> <p>Involving experts on relevant issues could help inform Scrutiny activity and support decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to Local Public Service Board/Coventry Partnership Board • Widen officer engagement, but ensure senior managers provide support to colleagues • Use information from the Household Survey and other consultation evidence to shape scrutiny work programme and activity • Use information from Member casework, Ward Forums, Neighbourhood Management etc. to shape Scrutiny work. • Include review of opportunities for service user/public engagement in planning for how to address specific items (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • Within 12 months • Throughout year • Throughout year • Throughout year
<p><i>Progress: the action shown in the first bullet point has been completed, but the 2009/2010 plan will need to include further development work with partners. The action shown in the second bullet point has been carried out and needs to continue. The actions shown in the third and fourth bullet points have yet to be completed and will need to be included in the 2009/2010 plan. The action shown in the last bullet point has been carried out throughout the year and will need to continue.</i></p>		

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Performance Management for Scrutiny</p> <p>To help review how much Scrutiny is achieving its objective and to ensure that it is continuously improving, Scrutiny needs its own performance management framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a performance management framework for Scrutiny • Introduce/reintroduce a tracking system for recommendations made by Scrutiny and how they are dealt with • Set out the framework and timetable for annual report and quarterly reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 6 months • For new municipal year • For new municipal year
<p><i>Progress: the actions shown in the first and second bullet points have yet to be completed and will need to be included in the 2009/2010 plan. The action shown in the third bullet point has been completed.</i></p>		
<p>Communication</p> <p>Planning and improving communications about Scrutiny will help address all of the issues identified above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications plan for Scrutiny (particularly focussing on good practice and positive outcomes) that targets key stakeholders including Elected Members, officers, partners organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 12 months
<p><i>Progress: the action shown in this bullet point has yet to be completed and will need to be included in the 2009/2010 plan.</i></p>		

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Implementing the requirements of the LGPIH and Police and Justice Acts</p> <p>Making sure arrangements are in place to meet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the requirement for Executives to respond to Overview and Scrutiny reports; • the requirement for some external partners to supply information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and for those partners involved in delivering Local Area Agreement Targets to have regard to the report or recommendations produced by those committees. • the provision for individual councillors to place items on the agendas of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to use the process to ensure that the Council responds to matters of concern to local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and agree process when guidance is published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependant on government timetable
<p><i>Progress: some of the work required has been carried out i.e. a pilot procedure has been agreed for the Councillor Call for Action and arrangements for the Executive to respond to Overview and Scrutiny reports has been drafted but have not yet been taken through the political process. These will need to be included in the 2009/2010 plan, along with other actions required by legislation e.g. petitions procedure.</i></p>		